

# PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE

## HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE HEARING

OCTOBER 10, 2024



Good morning, Chairman Schweyer and members of the House Education Committee. The Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) appreciates the opportunity to offer remarks on the efforts of the PSP Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Team (RVAT) to support the safety and security of the schools in our Commonwealth.

The PSP RVAT is a group of sworn Troopers who are trained to conduct professional risk and vulnerability assessments. RVAT initially became operational in April of 2004. Since its inception, RVAT has expanded to 18 full-time members consisting of 1 Sergeant, 3 Corporals, and 14 Troopers. RVAT is divided into three regions – west, central, and east. Each region is comprised of six unit members. Each RVAT member is required to attend the two-week Physical Security Training Program provided by the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center. Each member is also required to successfully obtain their Physical Security Professional board certification from the American Society for Industrial Security, or “ASIS.” These certifications meet the criteria established for RVAT members to be considered qualified assessors under Article XIII-B, Section 1307-B of the Public School Code of 1949. Over the last four years, RVAT has averaged 400 assessments a year.

The mission of RVAT is to assist with the safety and security of schools and universities, government buildings, private facilities, critical infrastructure and key resources, houses of worship, and pre-planned events. This mission is accomplished through professional risk and vulnerability assessments, consisting of comprehensive examination and evaluation of physical facilities and operational procedures. An assessment aims to identify critical assets and vulnerabilities to a wide range of potential threats. It also includes options which may be considered to improve the security posture

of the facility and to better mitigate the noted vulnerabilities. "Options for consideration" are mitigation suggestions or strategies presented to the stakeholder to improve the safety and security of the facility and occupants. These can range from something as simple as trimming overgrown vegetation to improve site lines, or more complex suggestions such as the installation of a video surveillance system or bollards to prevent vehicle intrusion into the facility. These suggestions are not meant to be all encompassing. The goal of these improvement options is to provide mitigation strategies for undesirable events and to provide means to deter or prevent an intrusion, delay an intruder, mitigate damage and loss of life, and provide methods to expedite the notification to authorities. Specific areas reviewed during an assessment include parking areas, access control, video surveillance systems, lighting, mail handling procedures, HVAC and utilities, emergency preparedness, facility communications, visitor and employee screening procedures, and overall perimeter and facility security.

When an assessment is requested by a school administration in particular, an administrator is provided basic paperwork to facilitate an official request for an assessment. Following the paperwork submission, the official request is logged and forwarded to the appropriate RVAT supervisor holding the rank of corporal for the regional unit that covers the school's location. The RVAT supervisor adds the school facility to the assessment list. School assessments are ranked in order of the school entities' market value/income aid ratio from high to low, as required under Section 1307-B of the Public School Code. As the time for the assessment approaches, the assigned Trooper will contact the school administrator to schedule the assessment, which generally takes two days to complete, though the timeframe is dependent on the size of the facility. The

assessment includes portions of the review of assessment areas of the facility both during the day and at night. Once the assessment report is complete, it is forwarded to and reviewed with the school administration.

The RVAT team is currently exploring methods by which they can remain engaged with schools beyond simply conducting an assessment, such as providing training opportunities to school administrators, school resource officers, and school employees on ways to identify threats and risks related to student behavior. RVAT members also provide presentations regarding the function of the unit at various locations throughout the year.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with information on the function of the PSP's RVAT as it relates to school safety and security. We look forward to participating in future discussions.